

RIDING THE RAILS STORIES

Now I will tell you some of our experiences while riding the freight trains from Washington to Texas. I will not necessarily try to keep the incidents in the order they happened. As we left Wenatchee, headed south one night we slowly crept along a mountain that had a forest fire which we could see from the door of our car. This was the Great Northern Railroad. The most friendly railroad of them all. There were two or three cars loaded with men. Fruit season was over and the regular hoboos and fruit workers were headed south. Our car was lined with people all around the sides trying to get some sleep when we came to the fire area. Different ones would get up and go look for awhile and then go back and lie down. Allen and I had spread our blankets down to make one bed and had been listening to a fellow (a wino) who was quoting poetry and constantly talking. We decided to go have a look at the burning trees, hoping the man would shut up and we would get some rest. After we gazed at the fire for awhile we made our way back to our place. It was rather dark and when we started to lie down this fellow was wrapped up right in the middle of our bed, snoring away. We whispered about what to do and decided we needed to give him a scare so he would leave us alone so we said we would pretend we were going to throw him out the door. We scooped him up. One on each side and gave him verbal heck for getting in our bed and threatening to throw him off, as we ushered him to the door. We had a hold of him by his clothes at the shoulder and seat of his pants. At the door, with him between us we heaved him forward and back counting one-two and on the forward motion of three he jumped right out of our hands and sailed out the door. That really startled us, as we only meant to give him a scare and now maybe we had killed him. The train was barely moving up the mountain. We looked out and back into the dark and were relieved to hear him cursing us for throwing him out. Knowing he was all right we went back and got into our bed. As we laid there, we could hear some low voices talking about how we had thrown that man right out of the car. We went to sleep satisfied no one would bother us. The next day the train made a stop and a brakeman came by the cars and said to give them a hand in setting off a hand car they had on a flat bed. Most everyone jumped off glad to stretch their legs. We had to walk back down the train several cars. They had so much help we didn't even get a chance to help. The brakeman said get back on and we'll move out. On the way back to our car we heard our wino poetry quoting friend talking in one of the door ways. I don't think he saw us, but we were relieved to know he had got on the train and was not stranded out on the mountain.

We soon picked up some knowledge from those who rode the rails all the time. The old timers seemed willing to pass along knowledge to help things go better. I will try and recall some of the essential things we learned in order to ride the rails in safety.

One thing was to never try and get in a freight car thru the doors in the sides if the train was moving. There wasn't anything to hold onto and your legs would generally swing under the car and pull your body out. If the car was standing still you could climb in with some effort, but it was too dangerous while moving.

Every car had ladders on the front and rear. These were provided so the trainmen, generally the brakemen, could get up on top and by means of a wheel, like a steering wheel; set the brakes on that car. This was done a lot as they switched cars around and put them on different tracks in the railroad yards. If a car was standing still, you could reach the top by using the ladder at either end, but if the car was moving it was dangerous to try and catch the ladder on the back end especially if the car had much speed and your feet missed a step, or the momentum was enough to swing you around you could swing between the cars.

Riding on lumber or any car with loose objects was dangerous. Right on top of the lumber was not too bad if the lumber was long, But never get down between the lumber stacks. There is a lot of jarring and sometimes the pieces of lumber would come loose and slide forward or backward depending from where the jolt came.

All engines in those days were steam engines. Some burned coal and some oil to heat the water into steam which in turn drove the pistons that drove the driver wheels on the engine. There were several different sizes of engines. The big ones were nick named "Road Hogs". Passenger trains were very popular and rolled very fast. They also had the right of way most of the time and freight trains would have to pull into sidings and wait for scheduled passenger trains.

The kinds of trains we were allowed to ride on were the freight trains that seemed to stop in every town and unhook a car or two, and add some to the train. In other words they were called the "Milk Trains". So sometimes we would be very slow in making progress as we stopped so often. All steam engines had to keep a supply of water for making steam. Of course they would fill up at the yards before pulling out, but sometimes they would have to stop along the way where water towers were built to supply the trains with water. The engines always seemed like they were alive even when standing still, as some steam would be hissing out and steam traps would dump and blow for a second or two.

All trains had a caboose as the last car. Generally two or three brakemen would ride in the caboose. When the train stopped, one brakeman would walk down the tracks away from the train as a safety measure if another train approached. The other brakeman or men would walk along the train looking for "hot boxes". These were the wheel bearings and if they were not kept oiled they would get hot and smoke and finally the bearing would seize on the wheel and not let it turn. It would just slide along. They also watched for several things that might go wrong, especially the connections of the air

hoses between the cars. The air hoses applied the brakes on each car when the engineer applied the brakes to slow down and or stop.

The engineer received hand signals during the day light hours from the brakemen. At night the signals came from a battery operated light that the brakemen would swing in different arc's to send signals. The engineer would answer with signals by different blows from the steam whistle on the engine.

As soon as the train would come to a stop either on the main line or a siding, the engineer would give the proper toots on the whistle to send the brakeman back down the tracks. The chief brakeman, sometimes called "the conductor" would signal the engineer when the train had been inspected and when the other train had cleared the siding and switches had been thrown properly so they could move again. The engineer would then give the toots to call the brakeman back to the train and when the brakemen got back on, the conductor would signal the engineer that it was OK to move. The engineer would answer with a short blast to indicate he was going to take up the slack in the train and start moving. As they got rolling and cleared the siding and got back on the main track and all was OK, the conductor would so signal and the engineer would give the blast of the whistle which indicated he was opening the throttle. We were always glad to be moving and rejoiced in hearing what we called the "high ball signal" knowing we were going to be rolling along again toward our destination.

At the division points of the railroad there would be a lot of tracks and generally a repair shop, and or a round house; the round house had a moveable table. An engine could pull into the round house and they could turn the table and send it out on another line or work on it. Of course the paying passengers loaded and unloaded at the railroad stations which were in every town. Also at the railroad station would be a telegraph office. The operator could send or receive messages by Morse Code. Telegraph wire lines were along the railroad right of way. I used to think I would like to be a telegraph operator.

Out in the yards the freight cars were made up into a train by the smaller engines. It was interesting to watch them push or pull cars all on one set of tracks. When they had the train made up the little switch engine would leave and soon out of the round house would come the huge "road hog" hissing steam and backing down the line to be coupled up with the train of cars waiting silently on the tracks. That's when we knew we had better get aboard, generally we would have been eyeing the cars looking for open doors of empties or something we could ride on.

However there were very few railroad yards that would allow the hoboes or any non-employee in their yards. Most yards of any size had one or more employees, whose responsibility it was to keep non-employees out. They carried a stick (big club) and were known as the "yard bulls." The hoboes who had been riding the rails a long time would

always warn us not to ride into or go into certain yards or the "yard bulls" would get us.

The trains would always slow way down as they entered the yards and we and the hoboos would get off. Then we would have to walk on a street adjacent to the yard until we were past the yard. Outside the yard would generally be a hobo camp, where they gathered to rest, eat, and sleep and just pass the time till they were ready to move on and then catch a train as it came out of the yards. Therefore you seldom knew what kind of cars were available.

We rode on several different kind of cars. The best, of course were the freight cars with sliding doors on both sides located in the middle. The gondolas were flat cars with sides and no top, like those that haul coal. Tanker cars had a tank with a small board walk around the car. "Reefers" were cars like the regular freight cars, but they also had a small area in the end sectioned off where they put ice to keep vegetables and fruits cool. There were two compartments in each end with a small trap-like door on top, thru which they loaded the ice. Then there were just flat cars that just had a flat bed.

The regular hoboos would generally walk thru the town asking for food at different homes. Allen and I never ever asked for anything. We usually would find a small grocery store and buy a loaf of bread and a can of something, generally pork and beans and maybe some fruit. Then we would eat it alone. We didn't want the others to know we had money to buy food. Sometimes they would offer us some of the food they had begged. They always seemed to be willing to share. I don't remember that we ever slept in a hobo camp. We would go off and find what we thought was a safe and secure place. Actually once we started a trip we usually kept right on catching the next train out of each yard and did our sleeping while traveling. We visited the hobo camps to pick up bits of information, like when they thought trains would move. Some seemed to know the schedules very well. Sometimes they knew a train would not be going out until the next day. Lots of times Allen and I would walk into the yard and ask the railroad men working in the yards when the next train was scheduled to go out. They were very good about telling us the schedule, but we always kept an eye open for the "yard bull" and we would retreat if one was around.

After we left Wenatachee, we spent a night in Dalles, Oregon. We were told the Great Northern Railroad had removed the wheels from two freight cars and had set them on the ground. Then they hooked up some steam heat so the hoboos and those who rode the freights could have a warm place to sleep. We went inside both of them to see this unusual set up. There were plenty of men bedded down. They had one or two dim light bulbs for light, but it was nice and warm. We could have spent the night but we had no desire to stay as we had also heard there was some lice in the cars. So we did our usual thing and went off by ourself to bed down and shiver the night thru for it was getting cold at night time.

Our next train ride took us back across the Columbia River and to Walla Walla, Washington. This would have been uneventful except we were walking in the rail yard trying to find out when the next freight would be going south to Pendleton, Oregon. All at once the "yard bull" appeared and yelled at us. We ran and he started chasing us. We would try and stay in the dark and hide behind some railroad ties, or small sheds. The "bull" had a light so it was easy to keep him spotted. This went on for some time. Finally he put out his light but we could be still and hear him walking. Sometimes he would pass within a few feet of us as we quietly moved around some object in the yard. It was quite a game of cat and mouse till he finally gave up and we could relax.

I think it was that night (its not really clear now) that we got into a "reefer" car. We went into the small compartment at the end by way of the lid or door on top. We would have preferred a different kind of car, but figured it would be warmer than most and once inside no one would know we were aboard. Besides we had no other choice. The safety measure in getting into an ice compartment was to put the bar, used to go across the lid when it was full of ice, down below the lid so no one could fasten the lid down without taking the bar out which would alert one inside the ice compartment. This kept the lid propped open a little. This car was filled with potatoes and thou the night air was cool the potatoes were warm and there was a strong smell of potatoes, which wasn't bad but not good either. The compartment was small, about 4 ft. by 2.5 ft. Therefore we could not lie down and stretch out, besides the floor was corrugated. We tried sitting facing one another, standing and leaning. It was a miserable situation, but the train was rolling and we were anxious to be on the way. All night we tried to get some rest. The next day we worked a couple potatoes out of a sack and thru the grating and ate them raw. Sometime in the afternoon as we were standing and leaning against the walls Allen became playful and reached over and pulled my cap down over my eyes. I pulled the cap up of course. He would soon repeat the act and I would say, "Allen stop that."

I guess the boredom was getting to him, because he kept pulling my cap down so hard it was hurting my ears. I began to get mad and the next time he pulled my cap down I slugged him right in the face with my right fist, even thou my eyes were covered with my cap. The very second I hit him I was afraid, as I was sure he would start punching me. I couldn't see a thing and I knew I was in a jam. By the time I got my cap pulled up he was just standing there. We just looked at one another for a little while and then quietly sat down facing each other. That was the end of cap pulling and the only time we ever got annoyed with each other. Later we would wrestle each day or box and never got upset with one another. We traded many blows in boxing and would keep it up until we were so weak we could hardly stand. I was always grateful that Allen didn't start throwing his weight and fists around that day.

The railroad yards going out of Pendleton, Oregon were rather unique. We walked around the yard and discovered the train rails made a large sweeping turn to the

right to parallel a small river. Along the river of very clear water were trees and places where people had camped. We found a good place to swim and decided we would stay over one day to wash our clothes, swim, and just rest and enjoy the spot. The railroad started up a grade going up into the mountains. The next day we washed some clothing and spread them over some bushes to dry and enjoyed swimming. By afternoon we had decided we would catch the afternoon freight train. We had found out there were only two trains out each day. One in the morning and one in the afternoon. We thought the train would be going slow up the grade so we were ready to catch it, only to have it go by so fast there was no way. So we did stay another night. We moved down the grade quite a ways and were ready the next morning. But to our surprise this one also was going too fast to catch. What to do? We decided our only chance was to get as close to the yards as possible and try again in the afternoon. We even looked for a spot close to the yards and selected a place where the area along the track was smoother. We even practiced making our start and running along the track. We got in one more good swim before getting in position for our only chance of getting on the road again. We tied our rolls tight and rolled them as small as possible and positioned them so they wouldn't impede our grabbing the ladder and holding on as the car went past. I was positioned a few feet up from Allen, being the slower runner. We were going to let the engine and two or three cars past and then break into our run alongside the train. I would have to watch the footing as it was rough, get very close to the moving cars and grab for the front ladder of a car. If I didn't make it Allen wouldn't try, even thou he would be running ready to catch the next car if I made it.

We got as close to the yard as possible. This was one yard that the high ball signal was given way back in the yard, so they could get more speed to climb the mountain. Finally, here she came hissing steam and churning the drivers wheels. There was two engines really huffing and puffing sending a huge plume of smoke up from the exhaust. I'm sure our adrenalin was high. There was no room for mistakes in footing or reaching and holding onto a rung of the ladder. A mistake could easily result in death. So at the proper time we let out a yell and broke into our run. I grabbed a rung with both hands and instantly was jerked into a speed probably going twice or more than the speed I was running. It felt like my arms were going to be pulled out of my shoulders, but I got my feet onto a rung and held on. Allen in watching to see if I was going to make it miss-judged the next car, but managed to catch the next one and we were on our way again. We caught several trains where you had to trot along to catch a rung but never one going that fast.

We had to climb up to the top of the cars and then walk along the top looking the train over trying to find something to ride in or on, to be out of the weather. In this case the cool mountain air. Jumping from the top of one car to another is a little tricky too, when the train is rolling and the cars are swaying back and forth. We couldn't find any thing so we just had to stay on top and sat down on the narrow walkway. I remember we went thru several tunnels. They always had a line across the tracks above

the train with some cloth strips hanging down that would brush one if they were standing up, to warn them of the tunnel. There was always enough room when sitting down. The bad part was the fumes left in the tunnel by the engine and also the smoke that nearly gagged you if the tunnel was long.

I'm not sure but I think we stayed on top all night, I remember it getting cooler and cooler and sometime the next day we got into a gondola. I think this was the gondola we rode into Baker Oregon.

The day we approached Baker Oregon we had been warned by the old timers to not ride into the yard. Also it was a long ways around the yards. We were anxious to get to Huntington where Aunt Jo and family lived so we decided to take a chance and ride into the yard and stay hid so we could continue on as the train left the yard. Our thinking was that if they were watching as the train approached the yard they would see the riders getting off and hopefully assume all had gotten off.

We were riding in a gondola car, which meant that from above was the only way we could be seen. We hunched down right against the back wall. As we came to a slow stop in the yard we just sat very quietly, not even whispering as we couldn't see out and didn't know if any one was close or not. In some yards they have a walk over bridge built above the track and sometimes one yard bull would stand above to look down on the train as it entered the yard. We hadn't noticed a bridge, but all at once we heard voices. There must have been 2 or 3 men voices. They stopped right beside our car. One voice said, " they have to be close, I saw them". Then they decided that some were to go forward and the others backwards, looking everywhere. We hardly breathed-just gave one another a sickly grin. If one had climbed up on the next freight car and looked back we would have been in plain sight. We think one climbed up on the car just in back of us, but the end wall we were keeping close to was high enough that we were out of his sight. We sure sweated out our stay in the yard as on two more occasions the voices got together right outside our gondola car. They were baffled but still certain "they" were on the train. We don't know when they gave up but we remained silent and didn't move, except for a hand signal to one another now and then.

Finally, after sitting still for more than an hour, the train started moving and we were relieved when we cleared the yard and started picking up speed. Sometimes we got awful thirsty and hardly ever ate on a regular schedule. This was one time we gave up the opportunity to eat and to get a drink. I remember that we got awfully hot as we stayed quietly in that metal gondola with the sun beating down on us and the air very still. We stood and watched the Oregon country side go by and the sun go down, but instantly it seemed to go from hot to cold as we sped thru the night toward Huntington, Oregon. It was rather late by the time we got to Aunt Jo and Curly's home. I'm sure Aunt Jo was glad it was night and her neighbors didn't see us with our bed rolls and think we were regular hoboes. We spent two or three weeks at Aunt Jo's and also Uncle

John's down on the Snake River. We spent Halloween at Aunt Jo's so it was around the 1st week of Nov. that we left for Ukiah California.

After Allen graduated from High School in Ukiah in 1939, we worked the summer and then rolled up our possessions in our bed rolls to ride the freight trains to my home in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This time we included our boxing gloves.

The first incident of any significant was in Bakersfield, California. We walked around the yard. On the way we purchased some food from a small grocery store. Getting information on freight train schedules was rather difficult. Late in the afternoon we finally caught a train coming out of the yard. All cars and reefers were closed up and we had to settle for a ride on top of lumber. It was a slow climb up the Tehachapi mountains with several sets of engines puffing away. It got dark before we got very far up in the mountains so we didn't get to see the famous Tehachapi loop of short tunnels, just darkness and cold. We covered up the best we could on top of the lumber. We seemed to stop a lot and wait for other trains or something. We did sleep some because I remember waking up to find a light coating of snow on top of the lumber. It was tempting to get down between the stacks of lumber, but that was too dangerous so we stayed up on top.

I remember we were stopped in Mojave for awhile. I don't remember if we were able to get a better car to ride on, but it was day light and getting warm again so it didn't matter, and once we left Barstow we rolled fast.

We had been told many times not ever to ride into the yards at Los Angeles as they would haul you off to the Lincoln Heights Jail. Of course we knew Los Angeles yards would be huge, so we had decided to get off in Glendale and ride a bus to Colton, California, the first division point for the railroad going east out of Los Angeles.

The train slowed down to go thru Glendale and we hopped off near the station. After riding on top of the lumber with the smoke trailing back over us at times we felt and were dirty. We walked to a service station and politely asked the manager if we could use his rest room to clean up and change clothes and promised to clean it up good. It would be understandable why he would have hesitated but he quickly gave us permission. We washed up good, ever our hair and changed clothes and then asked him for his mop bucket so we could clean the room and mop it for him. We cleaned it up spic and span, returned his mop and asked where the greyhound bus depot was located. He said farther on down the street. We asked if it would be okay to leave our rolls in the station so we wouldn't have to carry them down the street and he was agreeable.

About a couple blocks down the street a police car passed us with two policemen and they really were looking us over. They made a U turn to come back in our direction. We knew they would be questioning us about where we were going and etc. and checking

to see if we were vagrants. They could and would arrest vagrants if they so desired. Quickly we decide to tell them we were going to buy bus tickets to Colton where our Aunt Jo lived and work in their lemon orchard.

Sure enough they pulled up to the curb and got out. One asked Allen to walk down the sidewalk just out of earshot of the other policeman and me. They each asked us questions like where we were going, etc., and if we had any money. We both had quite a bit, so vagrancy could not be charged against us. The two policemen walked back together and compared the answer we each had given them. They decided we were okay for they said "OK" the bus depot is farther on down the street and we walked away.

After we had walked four or five blocks, the two policemen came cruising by again and again. They made a U-turn and wanted to know how came we were not at the Greyhound place. We explained we hadn't found it and were still looking. They said, "Get in. We will take you there." They soon pulled up in front of a drug store and had to point out a little sign that indicated this was a Greyhound stopping place. We never noticed it in walking past as we were thinking of a bus depot. We realized we had to get our rolls from the service station and told the policemen. They said they would take us to get them and on the way said something about the station manager that made us realize he had called the cops to pick us up. We got our rolls and the policemen took us to the bus place and went in to witness that we bought our tickets to Colton. Needless to say we stayed in the drug store until the bus arrived and took us aboard.

When we got off the bus in Colton, we were right in town and it was late in the afternoon, about dark. We had no idea where the railroad yards were located. Not wanting to hunt them in the dark we decided to get a motel room as we were close to a motel and we hadn't rested very good for several nights and realized how tired we were on the bus ride over.

After the luxury of a bath at the motel we were refreshed enough to go walking around and we were curious about what the search light down the street was advertizing. We found out this was the opening night for a brand new theater, so we got in line to go to the first movie. I don't remember the movie but the inside of the theater was beautiful with two life size golden deer on each side of the stage. A lady played the piano down in front until time for the movie to start.

The next day we found out where the railroad station was located and knew the yards would be close, so with our rolls we walked back to "the riding of the rails type of life". That day we walked into the area where some hoboes were camped. Some were heating water in gallon tin cans, some making hot coffee, the contrast with a comfortable bed in a room with walls and a roof and running water really sank in on me and I felt real down hearted.

We came upon an older, grey haired man that had some water heating in a tin can and he was shaving himself with a straight razor and looking into a small broken piece of mirror. I guess we thought he could tell us when the freight trains would leave the yard. Anyway we started talking to him and he had a very raspy voice and said he had just got out of a box car. That the doors had been closed and locked while he was inside and he ended up sitting on a siding for three days, before he got someone's attention to open the door. His story didn't help my feelings at all.

We caught the first available freight out and soon we were hearing the familiar klickity-clack of the wheels, and were feeling the swaying of the cars as we headed east towards Texas.

Somewhere in Arizona we found a whole bunch of men waiting under the shade of an ice loading dock on the edge of a railroad yard. On the trip from Ukiah we hadn't seen very many riding the trains, but for some reason here was about 100 men strung out for a city block in the shade waiting for a ride out. We walked to the far end and took a place in the shade for it was hot. As we sat there facing the tracks we could witness the switch engines making up a train right in front of us and on the outside tracks nearest the ice dock. About the time it was made up, the conductor-brakeman came walking down the line of men. Every few feet he would stop and say something. Of course we were interested and when he got close his message was that this train was a "manifest" loaded with vegetables. No empties. It would be headed east with preference even over passenger trains so no one was to get on this train. The next local train would be in 3 or 4 hours.

Well the temptation was too great, no slow train stopping every little bit. A fast trip east, just what we wanted. We could see open reefer lids on top and knew they were not filled with ice and if we could get down inside without then knowing, we would have a fast ride to Texas. So we decided we would just lie back and act nonchalant and when the train started moving and got up some speed and we couldn't see any trainmen, we would make a run for the train, catch a car, scamper up on top, and get down in an open ice compartment. Well we did just that, but about the time we got down into the ice compartment we heard this fellow yelling at us. So we had to climb out. I put my roll over my head in case he started hitting with the club he was carrying. He just grabbed the roll and threw it over the side. It was the same man that had walked along telling us not to get on the train. He was mad of course, but I didn't listen as I was only interested in getting off safely, as we were rolling pretty fast by now. He did the same with Allen's bed roll. We climbed down and hit the ground on a dead run without going on our faces. Our bedrolls were not so lucky, they had scattered some of our belongings for quite a ways. We gathered everything up and walked back to get in the shade. This had been an entertaining event for all those waiting there. They stood up and gave us a standing ovation as we approached. Better than a comedy movie to them, I suppose. No one said a thing to us one way or the other about the incident. We just waited and

waited till we could get on a local train.

Somewhere in New Mexico we got on a train, and a tanker car was the only thing we could find to ride on. The tank had one walk-plank about eight inches wide all the way around it. This wasn't too bad at first as the weather was warm, but we rode it all one night. During the night it got cold and there was no way to get any rest. Allen took over the walk-way right behind the freight (box) car in front and laid down on the walk way and sorta jammed himself in, in such a way he didn't have to hold on and he got some rest and maybe some sleep. But I tried to find a place where I could rest or relax but to no avail. One could fall between the walk way and the tank or over the outside. We were always on flat terrain and doing probably 60 miles an hour. Before morning I got so tired and sleepy sitting on the walk way, I, at times, felt like just turning loose and falling off. I really had to fight myself. I can remember sitting right over the wheels with my legs hanging down and watching the sparks fly off the rails as the wheels turned. I would become so mesmerized that my head would drop and I would nearly pitch forward off the walk way. It was one of the longest nights I ever put in.

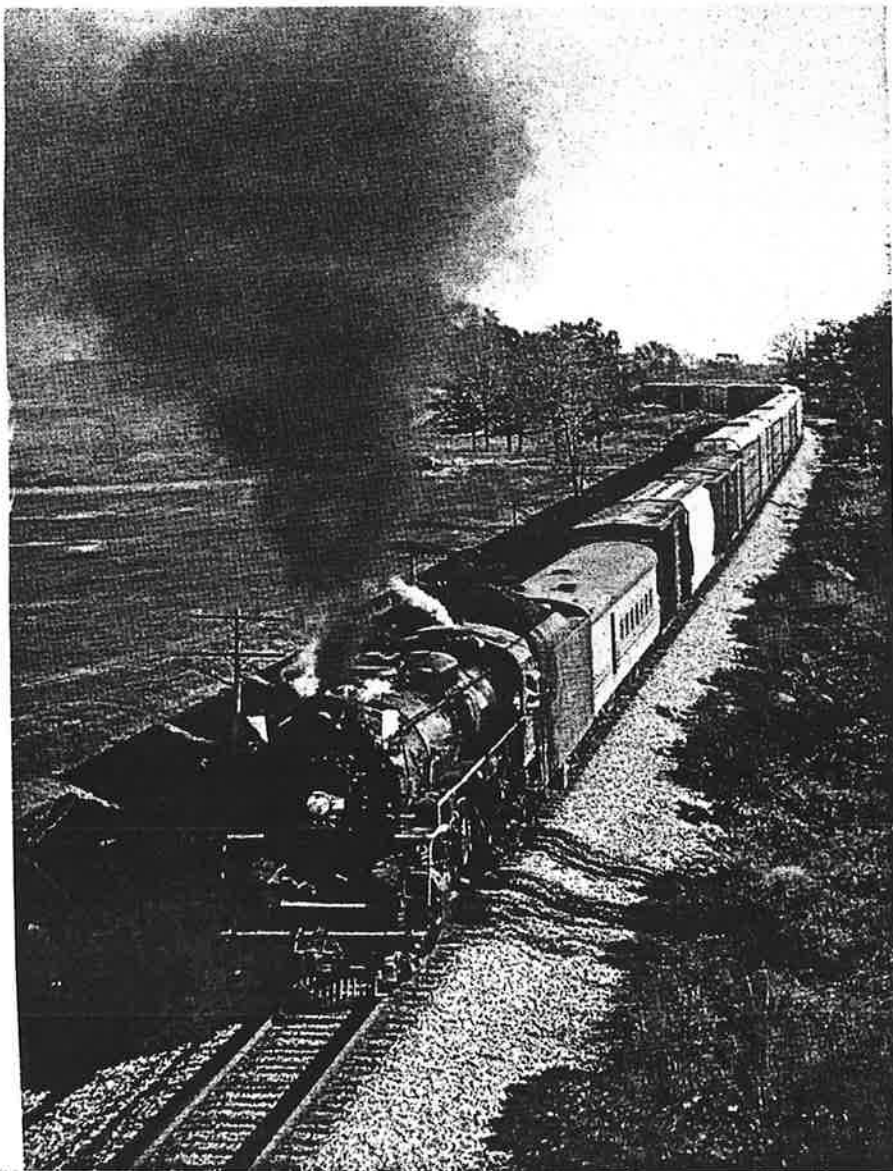
In the El Paso yard a couple hoboes pointed out to us where a young man had his legs cut off by the train wheels. He tried to jump up into the door way of a moving freight car. His legs swung under the car and pulled him out and the wheels ran over him. They said the ambulance had taken him away about two hours before we arrived. Nevertheless, we decided to catch the next available train out because it might be days before another freight would slow down at this place. However on inquiry at the passenger railroad station we found out that later that night a passenger train was due to stop there if they had passengers. We bought tickets to ride to the next division point.

When the passenger train arrived we got on and found two comfortable seats facing one another. We were the only ones to get on and we were so tired and sleepy that neither one of us remembered anything about the ride. We fell asleep and the conductor had to really shake us to get us awake at our destination. It had been a 45 minute ride and we couldn't believe we had moved and tried to insist we had just got on.

We got off at the railroad station and it was drizzling rain, we just walked over in the dark beside the station and sat under the eaves out of the rain. As soon as the passenger train pulled out they started putting freight cars on the main line right in front of us, so we felt like we might get back on a train soon. It was well after midnight and they kept adding cars. The rain kept up and we both kept dozing off till finally Allen was sound asleep. I tried to stay awake but my senses were very dull. All at once I realized the train was moving. I started waking up Allen and thought I would never get him on his feet. All the time the train is getting faster and faster, finally he was awake enough to move and we got on, but not a bit too soon as it was almost the end of the train.

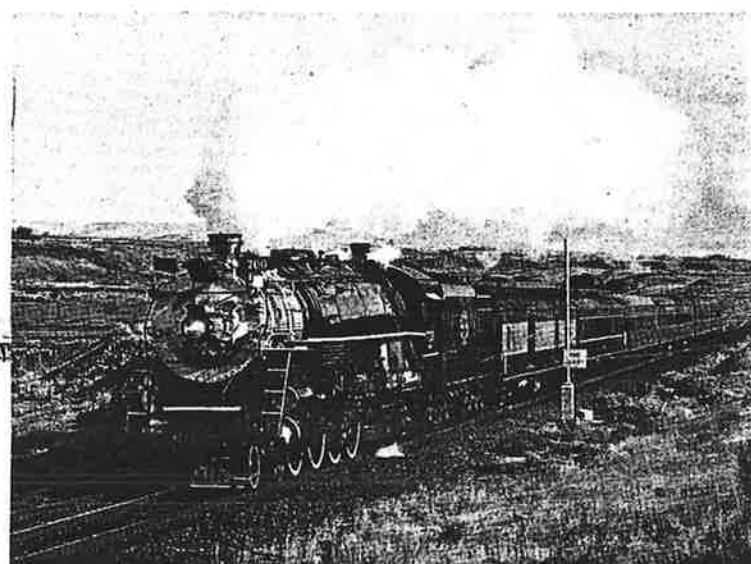
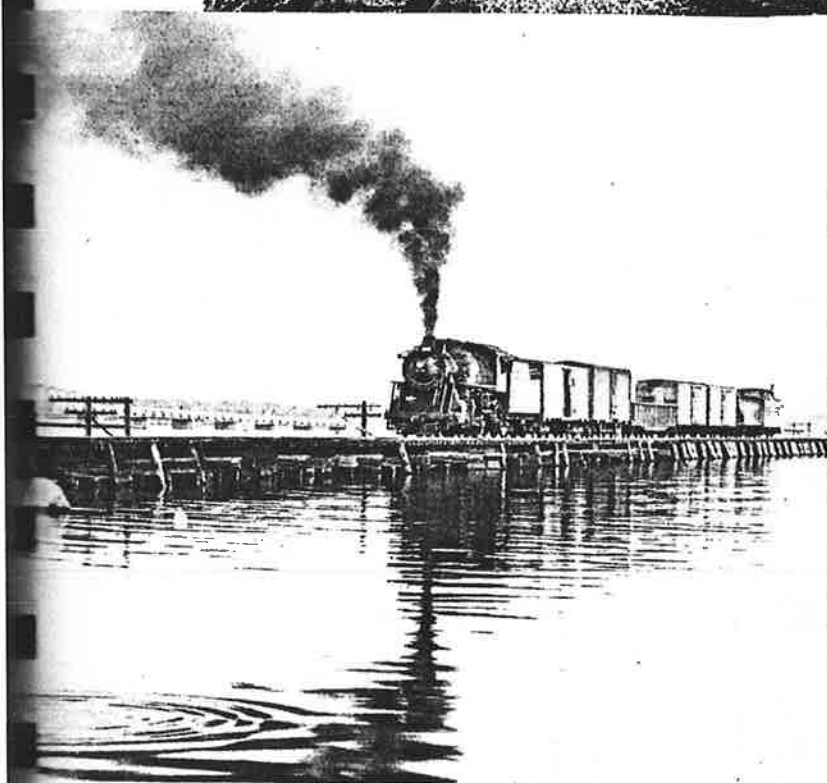
One hot sunny afternoon we were riding in a gondola. By this time we were deep in the heart of Texas. Allen and I had purchased some apples and had some left in a paper sack. There were several others in our car. As the train slowed to a mere crawl we all were standing looking over the side to see what was coming up. We started over a wide ravine on a train trestle. It was so tall and wobbly that the train had to go slow to keep from shaking the trestle to pieces. We all could see down in the ravine a man squatted down behind a bush with his pants down looking the other way. I guess he thought he was hid from sight. On impulse Allen picked up an apple and heaved it at the squatting man. We watched it sail and sail; as it dropped, it went out of sight. But all at once the man jumped like he was hit or startled. He whirled around still clutching at his pants and looked up at the train and started shaking his fist. We all had a good laugh which took off some of the boredom of riding in an open gondola in the hot Texas sun. Well not much out of the ordinary happened, as we soon arrived in San Antonio and headed south for the Rio Grande Valley and my home.

By now I had about reached the end of my teens. However, in less than a year I headed back for California. This time in an automobile, and this time to Los Angeles. Not looking for work, but to attend an aeronautical school. No more freight train rides.

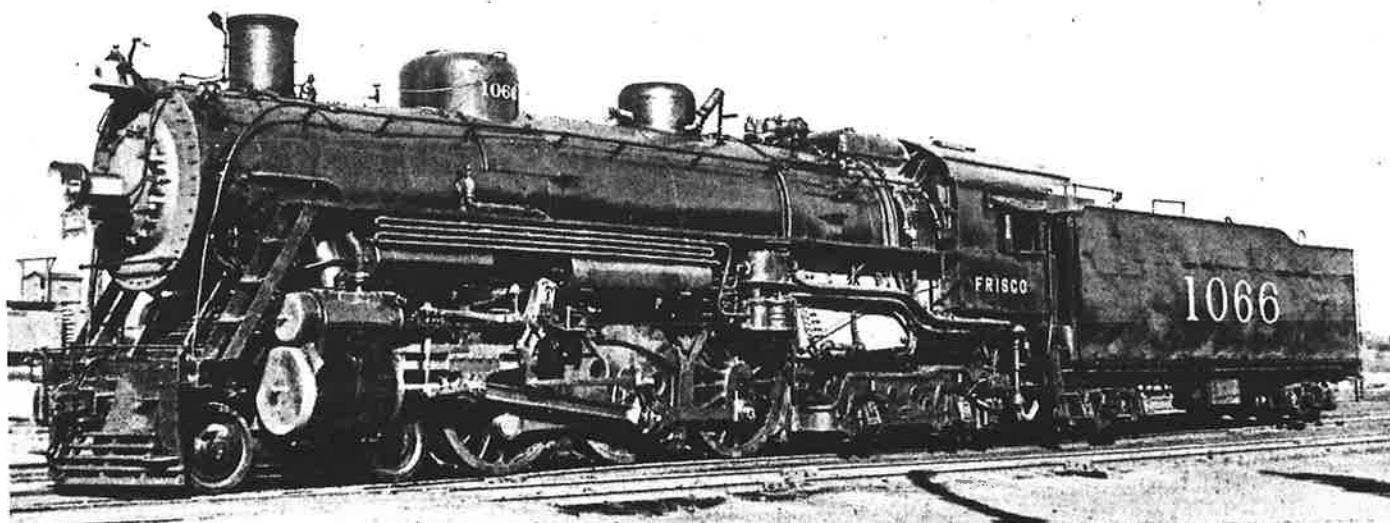


FREIGHT TRAIN
COMING AROUND
THE BEND

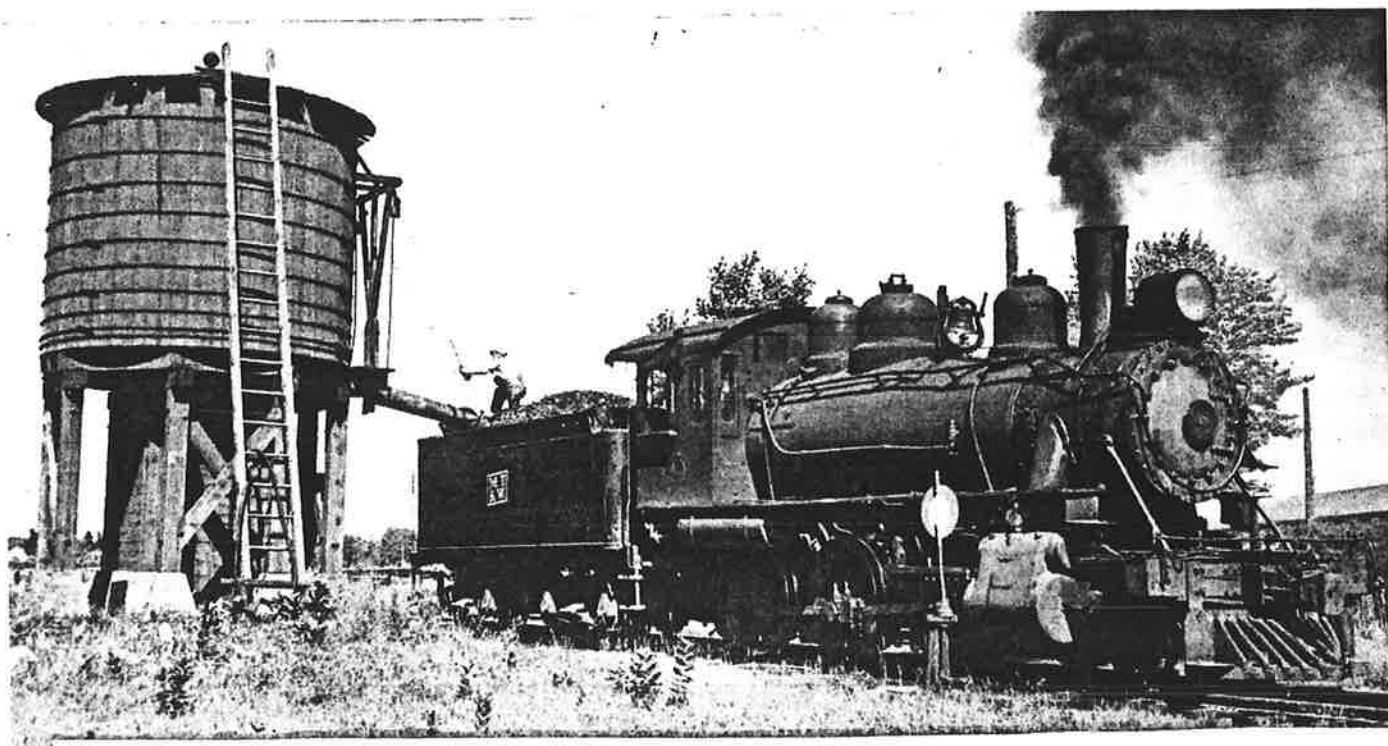
BLACK SMOKE AND WHITE STEAM



THE TRAINS AND THE RIVERS ALWAYS RUN.
— OLIVER PERKINS



A 4-6-4 STEAM ENGINE KNOWN AS "ROAD HOG" OR "BIG BOY"



SMALL STEAM ENGINE TAKING ON WATER